

# The National Challenge: Raising standards, supporting schools

Gifted and Talented Pilot Programme  
Introduction and overview

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# The National Strategies

## National Challenge



# The National Challenge: Raising standards, supporting schools

## Gifted and Talented Pilot Programme Introduction and overview



department for  
children, schools and families



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# Introduction

This is the first in a series of resources to be published by the National Strategies to help schools in this National Challenge pilot to accelerate the progress and enrich the learning of gifted and talented (G&T) pupils. It sets out:

- the principles and objectives of the programme
- the commitment required from schools and local authorities (LAs)
- the nature of the intervention and the support available to schools and LAs
- the first steps for implementation.

**Further advice and guidance, including a set of FAQs, will be available early in the summer term (2009).**

## The Pilot Programme

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) National Challenge Gifted and Talented Pilot Programme is scheduled to run for two and a half years, from spring term 2009 to the end of summer 2011.

The pilot is designed for schools that: are supported by National Challenge; are already close to national floor targets; have leaders who are committed to extending the challenge and support they offer to gifted and talented pupils; and have enough leadership capacity to make it happen.

- The programme enables schools to focus both on raising the bar and narrowing the gap, by identifying and developing the rich and often hidden potential of young people.
- By applying classroom quality standards for G&T pupils, it has the potential to improve provision for all learners through development of quality first teaching.
- It provides good opportunities for schools to make important positive statements to parents, community and partners about their aspirations and ambitions.

## Alignment with National Challenge

This programme is designed to be fully aligned with National Challenge.

Programme materials are designed to complement the Core Plus and Stronger Management Systems materials which have already been published for schools supported by National Challenge. They adopt a similar approach, which includes the use of quality standards and six weekly improvement cycles.

As with other published materials, the focus is on direct impact on teaching and learning through approaches that enable teachers to undertake development work with the classes they teach. Time required for meetings out of school to reflect on progress and share good practice is kept to a minimum.

Schools engaged in the pilot should ensure that involvement brings a sharper focus on existing improvement priorities identified through the Raising Attainment Plan (RAP).

This work also draws on current developments in the Gifted and Talented programme and the use of G&T Quality Standards, and will support wider G&T work including the mainstreaming agenda.

# Principles

The following principles underpin the objectives and activities of the pilot:

## **Excellence for all**

Quality first teaching with high challenge and high support is at the heart of effective provision for G&T learners

Teaching and learning improves for **all** pupils when there is a sharp, sustained focus on engagement and quality first teaching for G&T pupils

## **Support and aspiration**

G&T pupils become more engaged in learning when planning for progression is personalised, when progress is tracked and challenging targets are negotiated

## **Unlocking potential**

Disadvantaged pupils have potential and gifts and talents which often go unrecognised. These can be identified and developed through an explicit focus on their needs as learners

## **Impact and capacity-building**

Engagement in the programme should build capacity for the future, and have a tangible and rapid impact on quality of learning, ethos and standards.



# Objectives

1. To enhance the National Challenge programme by encouraging a pilot group of secondary schools, with viable plans for closing the gap, to develop additional and sustainable school improvement strategies through a systematic and supported focus on raising achievement for their G&T learners.
2. To contribute positively and measurably to the outcomes of the National Challenge initiative by increasing attainment and improving the quality of teaching and learning.
3. To generate solutions that are flexible enough to fit a range of schools and which, for each school:
  - meet the needs and interests of G&T learners
  - raise standards by raising the bar
  - support and extend each school's strategy for closing the gap through raising aspirations and expectations
  - encourage a school learning culture which values excellence and success and nurtures strong role models
  - impact on the quality and design of the curriculum through enrichment and increased opportunity
  - improve the quality of teaching for all pupils.
4. To provide an improvement model and produce tools and materials that could support other schools wishing to adopt similar approaches in the future.
5. To engage and align with contributory partners, including the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), in embedding the pilot and evaluating its outcomes to maximise impact on their wider work and support for other schools in adopting effective practice.
6. To initiate evaluation of the pilot with a view to producing a high-profile discussion paper focusing on best practice in the pursuit of excellence in challenging schools.
7. To develop strategies that encourage and support the proactive engagement of parents.

# Criteria for involvement

Following an initial expression of interest, pilot schools:

- have capable leadership and a capable leading teacher for gifted and talented pupils with strong backing from the leadership team;
- in most cases have at least 25% of pupils achieving five or more A\*– C grades at GCSE including English and maths, and demonstrate an improving trend over the last two to three years;
- have average or higher proportions of FSM-eligible pupils, and within the context of their location have a relatively mixed intake in terms of pupils' ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds;
- recognise there is underachievement among their gifted and talented and high-attaining learners, including in terms of progression across each key stage;
- are positive about the potential of this initiative to strengthen provision and raise standards.

Schools are drawn from LAs that:

- lie outside the City Challenge areas (where there is already extensive G&T support)
- are able to provide the support of experienced and capable secondary school improvement and G&T lead advisers who are prepared to become strongly involved and have backing from their Director of Children's Services (DCS) for doing so.

Schools that have expressed an interest, but either do not sufficiently meet the criteria or contribute to regional or other coverage, have been invited to become **associate schools**, with full access to published materials, advice and network meetings to share good practice.



# The commitment

Joining the programme involves the following important commitments from schools and local authorities.

## Pilot schools

In joining the programme, schools are expected:

- to use their involvement to add momentum to current National Challenge work
- to identify a suitable target group of gifted and talented (G&T) pupils
- to ensure the school has a leading teacher for G&T to drive development of pedagogy and act as progress leader to coordinate tracking and support of pupils involved
- to review and adjust the school's RAP as necessary to show
  - how improved progress for the target group of pupils will contribute to school outcomes, ethos and expectations
  - how improvement is linked with six-week improvement cycles
  - how the RAP management group will monitor, evaluate and review involvement in the project
- to work with the local authority G&T lead and National Strategies staff to develop practice and ensure impact
- to release a senior member of staff for up to one day per term to attend regional network meetings to share and develop good practice
- to support the research team in evaluating impact, and the LA in capturing good practice.

## Local authorities

LAs make an important contribution to the programme and will be expected:

- to work through their school improvement teams in partnership with the National Challenge adviser(s) (NCAs) and school(s) and to support their engagement
- to nominate an experienced and capable G&T lead to offer support to schools, work with National Strategies staff and attend territorial network meetings to share and develop good practice
- to support the research team in evaluating impact and to take a central role in capturing good local practice.

Wider benefits to LAs include opportunities to disseminate information about the programme more widely in their area, to build wider networks of good practice across regions and to engage with the development and use of new resources.

## Associate schools

Where associate status is offered, no formal commitment is expected. Schools are entitled, however:

- to have full access to programme material and guidance
- to attend territorial pilot network events.

# The offer

In essence, the programme offers:

- online elements and wider resources to develop pedagogy
- bursaries and access to online learning for young people involved
- the support of the National Strategies and local authorities
- opportunities to share and learn from good practice
- enhanced professional development opportunities for leading teachers for Gifted and Talented education
- where possible, the support of a high-performing specialist school (HPSS) to help develop classroom practice.

## Nature of intervention

1. Schools will have the support of their NCAs for engagement with the pilot. They will also be supported by the LA.
2. Schools will be part of a territorial network and, where possible, local LA-based groups. There will also be the opportunity to be part of a national online network.
3. Each LA's school improvement and G&T professionals will be expected to work collaboratively to support the NCA in managing and monitoring progress. The National Strategy G&T team will provide support to LA leads. Where possible, each school or local group will also be paired with a high-performing specialist school with a G&T option.
4. Support will comprise:
  - establishing suitably pitched and specific targets for progress by G&T pupils/high attainers, fully consistent with and integrated into the National Challenge Raising Attainment Plan;
  - rapid audit and advice to ensure that all pilot schools are taking full advantage of existing support and resources available to them and have a challenging but realistic improvement plan derived from the G&T Quality Standards;
  - ongoing mentoring, advice and support for the G&T leading teacher in implementing the improvement plan, with a view to achieving 'improving' level against all aspects of the G&T Quality Standards and at least two areas of 'exemplary' practice by 2011 (so enabling these schools to apply for HPSS status themselves by 2011);
  - an entitlement for identified academically gifted pupils eligible for FSM in Key Stage 4 (i.e. the target group of pupils) to a matched bursary of £250 per academic year for two years (50% funded by the Government and 50% by the school) and a support programme designed to help them achieve the best possible outcomes at 16 and transfer into their post-16 settings with a plan to secure HE entry at a target university. This will be adapted from the support being developed for Year 10–13 students in City Challenge areas. Schools will be expected to continue funding at this level after the end of the pilot;
  - provision of targeted blended academic study support designed to help all G&T students at pilot schools to achieve at least two levels of progress in Key Stage 4 and, wherever possible, to achieve 3+ A\*/A grades at GCSE;
  - access to suitable regional and local out-of-hours provision, for example through the regional Excellence Hubs for G&T and LA G&T summer schools (where these continue);

- co-operative development of whole-school ‘excellence for all’ strategies designed to benefit all pupils within each school, using and adapting the G&T Institutional (whole-school) Quality Standards (IQS) and Classroom Quality Standards (CQS) as the template, and ensuring that these strategies are fully embedded in the ethos of each school;
- guidance on personalisation and G&T pedagogy linked to Core Plus materials and the CQS;
- the possibility of involvement in accreditation opportunities for leading teachers for G&T, reflecting the practice developed and evaluated through the core pilot;
- formative and summative evaluation of the whole pilot, especially the ‘excellence for all’ strategies.

### National Strategies support will include:

- a set of guidance documents for NCAs and NC schools;
- provision of G&T data for all pilot schools, and support for analysis of pupils’ progress from level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2 against the national picture;
- three G&T elements modelled on existing National Challenge programme materials in relation to pedagogy, tracking and planning, offering for each: rationale, quality standards, exemplification, CPD and links with existing NS resources;
- termly network meetings for staff supporting National Challenge schools (LA leads and Senior leadership team (SLT) lead/G&T leading teachers, NCAs) to provide support and to capture and share good practice;
- academic Study Support web materials for guided pupil use;
- support of regional advisers and a senior adviser to schools and LAs.



# Getting started

The sections below set out key areas for initial work:

## Establish management arrangements

- Agree senior leadership team lead and G&T lead and accountabilities.
- Identify progress leader for target and focus pupil groups.
- Plan how you will ensure staff, pupil and parent involvement in the programme.
- Agree any changes to the school RAP and how the RAP management group will monitor, support and challenge progress.

## Identify a target group

- Review and update your G&T register.
- Consider what proportion of those listed are from disadvantaged backgrounds (in particular, entitled to FSM).
- Consider whether and where there are disadvantaged pupils who could potentially be included on the G&T register, given additional support; consider whether changes and additions to the register are required.
- Agree a **target group** of up to 16 pupils who will benefit from the bursary – these should be underachieving G&T pupils from the 2009–10 Year 10 cohort whose faster progress would significantly accelerate progression to the NC floor target.
- Identify a wider **focus group** of G&T or potential Key Stage 4 G&T pupils whose progress will also be tracked and who will receive additional support to accelerate progress.
- Quantify the improvement in attainment you expect from these groups and how it will contribute to school targets.

## Review provision

- Begin using, or continue to use, the G&T Institutional Quality Standards self-evaluation tool to assess provision and identify next steps for improvement.
- Agree key actions, including an approach to assessing classroom provision using the G&T Classroom Quality Standards.
- Adjust the RAP to take account of actions needed to support the work of the pilot.

# Timelines

The table below sets out key actions for the first stages of the pilot. A full outline for the life of the pilot and a detailed timeline for the first year will be provided in the summer term.

## Key actions: summer term 2009

When	Key actions	Responsibility of:
April–May	Agree internal leadership arrangements and accountabilities including nominated SLT lead	Senior leadership team (SLT)
April–May	Review the G&T register and plan to update as appropriate	SLT; leading teacher for G&T
In line with scheduled review	Review and revise RAP to take account of G&T pilot	SLT; NCA
April–May (or as appropriate)	Provide CPD opportunities for leading teacher for G&T (for example provide leading teacher training on use of G&T Quality Standards)	LA
May–June	Identify target and focus groups of pupils ready for September 2009	SLT; leading teacher for G&T
April–June	Evaluate G&T provision at whole-school level using the IQS and develop action plan to feed into the RAP	SLT; leading teacher for G&T; LA G&T lead
June	Attend NS territorial NC G&T pilot network meetings: North Territory – 2 June Central Territory – 10 June South Territory – 11 June	SLT; LA
May–July as appropriate	Plan and implement actions to inform and engage staff, pupils and parents	SLT



# Evaluating impact

In line with the principles of National Challenge, schools lead their own improvement, build capacity and evaluate progress by regular review of their RAP through the RAP management group. This will also apply to the G&T pilot programme.

In developing this project, however, it will be important to evaluate the impact of this work on progress, outcomes and ethos. This will enable:

- the celebration of the aspiration, commitment and development of schools supported by the National Challenge and
- consideration of the potential to scale up this way of working for a wider group of schools.

RAPs, schools supported by National Challenge and NCAs have consistently recognised the importance of a clear, sharp focus on rapid improvement and close attention to the core business of teaching and learning. As a consequence, it is proposed to keep to minimum expectations of how schools contribute to a wider capture of good practice. We will evaluate the project by:

- use of commissioned external research;
- invitations to LA G&T leads to describe local good practice and contribute to a resource bank of 'what works well';
- school review through participation in termly territorial network events that provide opportunities for reflection and sharing good practice;
- occasional short online questionnaires to pilot schools.





## Appendix – Gifted and Talented resources

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)

Select the *Inclusion* tab and then enter the *Gifted and Talented* section

Resource	URL	Description
Handbook for leading teachers for gifted and talented education (Revised 2008)	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search using the ref: 00577-2008FLR-EN	This handbook (with CD-ROM) focuses on developing an understanding of how a leading teacher might work across a school, or a group of schools, to improve gifted and talented provision and outcomes for pupils. It provides some of the resources that will support this and signposts further resources, including online materials, that may be adapted for use by leading teachers and others.
G&T e-learning modules	<a href="http://www.nationalstrategiescpd.org.uk">www.nationalstrategiescpd.org.uk</a>	A suite of e-learning modules for leading teachers and classroom teachers covering aspects of Gifted and Talented education in schools.
Gifted and talented Classroom Quality Standards (CQS) guided resource	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search for: <i>CQS guided resource</i>	This on-line resource, launched in November 2008, features the generic and subject Classroom Quality Standards self-evaluation tools, together with case studies, guidance and exemplification to support improvement..
Evaluating gifted and talented education - A handbook for school improvement partners	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search using the ref: 00016-2009BKT-EN	This document aims to support school improvement partners (SIPs) in the key aspects of their role as these relate to outcomes for gifted and talented education.

Resource	URL	Description
Preventing underachievement series	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search for <i>Guidance on preventing underachievement</i>	A series that seeks to address support and provision for gifted and talented pupils who are either underachieving or at risk of underachieving.
1. Gifted and talented education: Guidance on preventing underachievement – a focus on dual or multiple exceptionality (DME)	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search using the ref: 00061-2007BKT-EN	The focus of this guidance is the discussion of underachievement due to dual or multiple exceptionalities. Pupils with gifts or talents exist within all groups of pupils. This includes those pupils who have been identified as having additional learning needs.
2. Gifted and talented education – Helping to find and support children with dual or multiple exceptionalities	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search using the ref: 00052-2008BKT-EN	This booklet provides details on identifying and supporting children who are highly able but who have sensory impairment, learning problems, conduct issues and/or disabilities.
3. Gifted and talented education – Guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on children and young people in care	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search using the ref: 00873-2007BKT-EN	The focus of this guidance is the prevention of underachievement for children and young people in care (children who are looked after).
4. Gifted and talented education – Guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on exceptionally able children	<a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a> Search using the ref: 00066-2008BKT-EN	This booklet aims to further develop teachers' shared knowledge and understanding of the nature of high-quality gifted and talented education, specifically for exceptionally able pupils.

Resource	URL	Description
Identifying gifted and talented learners – getting started (Revised May 2008)	<a href="http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications">www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications</a> Search using the ref: DCSF-00367-2008	This is the second edition of core guidance on the identification of gifted and talented learners, and provides an update to the 2006 initial guidance.
Effective provision for gifted and talented children in primary education (Revised May 2008)	<a href="http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications">www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications</a> Search using the ref: DCSF-00379-2008	Updated guidance on general principles for primary schools on planning and delivering effective provision for gifted and talented learners. This revision sets out expectations, as well as the range of support and resources available through the national programme.
Effective provision for gifted and talented children in secondary education	<a href="http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications">www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications</a> Search using the ref: DCSF-00830-2007	This guidance will be of interest to all senior leaders responsible for whole-school provision. It also provides support for all staff in identifying gifted and talented students and providing them with an appropriately personalised education.
YG&T in a nutshell	<a href="http://www.ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/nutshells.aspx">www.ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/nutshells.aspx</a>	38 bite-sized e-modules for busy professionals, including a 20-minute run-through of the highlights of themes and subjects relating to G&T provision.
Evaluating school performance	<a href="http://www.nationalstrategiescpd.org.uk">www.nationalstrategiescpd.org.uk</a> Select <i>Evaluating School Performance</i> from the <i>Leadership</i> menu option	Guidance, advice and examples on how to use data to evaluate and improve school performance.
Institutional Quality Standards	<a href="http://www.ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/QSTool/qs.doc">www.ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/QSTool/qs.doc</a>	The Institutional Quality Standards are designed as a self-evaluation tool for schools and colleges. The tool can be used to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in support for gifted and talented learners. It will provide a sound basis for an action plan that can form part of the institution's overall improvement plan.



Audience: Secondary headteachers and school leadership teams, National Challenge advisers and local authority strategic leads

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